
— Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. —

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We are in the midst of the Mother's Birth Centenary Year. May we follow the sunlit path shown by Sri Aurobindo: "Keep yourself open to the Mother, remember her always and let her Force work in you, rejecting all other influences — that is the rule for Yoga."

A story to understand the how and why of things

I have received four questions. Naturally they are not about what I have just read, and they are on three different subjects. And each one needs a very lengthy answer. But still, I am going to take the first two which go together. They are about the involution of the Spirit.¹

The first question:

*"If all that is to manifest
Matter hidden already involved in
it, other principles
and which will be revealed
by manifestation?"*

Logically for essentially, there is an identity between the Supreme. But...and this brings in the second question:

"Did the involution take place in Time and does it have a history as evolution has?"

It could almost be said that the answer to this ques-

¹ Sri Aurobindo tells us that evolution is the result of an involution. Thus, life is involved in Matter, mind is involved in life and supermind is involved in mind. Nothing can come out of nothing; it is because the Supreme is involved in Matter that the Supreme can emerge from Matter. — Ed.

tion depends on the mental attitude of the person who asks it.... Scholars will tell you that there are different schools which have spoken about these things in ways that are also very different. There are the metaphysicians who deny any history, minds that are essentially speculative, philosophical and, as I said, metaphysical, abstract, who consider that histories are only for children. There are the psychologists who translate everything into movements of consciousness, and finally there are those who love images and for whom universal history is a great development which might be described as "cinematographic", and this development in pictures is for them something much more living and tangible, for even if it is only symbolic, it makes them understand things in a more intimate and real way.

It goes without saying that the three explanations are equally true, and that the important thing is to be able to synthesise and harmonise them in one's thought. But we shall put aside the aridities of metaphysics, for it is better to read about them in the books of scholars who tell you things in a very precise, very exact and very dry fashion ! The psychological point of view... it is better to live it than speak about it. So we are left with the story for children. It is good to be always a child. And although we must take care not to believe in it as a dogma in which nothing should be changed if one doesn't want to be sacrilegious, we can at least take these stories as a means to make living to our childlike consciousness something which would otherwise be too remote from us.

There we can choose from many stories that have

been told, stories more or less true, more or less complete, more or less expressive. But if by interiorising or exteriorising oneself — which, from a certain point of view, is essentially the same thing — if one can relive this story, at least partially and in its broad outlines, it helps one to understand and hence to master the how and why of things. Some people have done that, they are the ones usually considered as initiates, occultists and prophets at the same time — and very beautiful stories have been told.

I am going to tell you one, very succinctly. Don't take it as a gospel ! Take it rather... as a story.

When the Supreme decided to exteriorise Himself in order to be able to see Himself, the first thing in Himself which He exteriorised was the Knowledge of the world and the Power to create it. This Knowledge-Consciousness and Force began its work; and in the supreme Will there was a plan, and in the first principle of this plan was the expiations of men, the essential Joy and the essential Freedom in the books to be the most interesting feature of my precise, very

So intermediaries were needed to express this Joy and Freedom in forms. And at first four Beings were emanated to start this universal development which was to be the progressive objectivisation of all that is potentially contained in the Supreme. These Beings were, in the principle of their existence: Consciousness and Light, Life, Bliss and Love, and Truth.

You can easily imagine that they had a sense of great power, great strength, of something tremendous, for they were essentially the very principle of these



EVOLUTION

Painting by Padma

things. Besides, they had full freedom of choice, for this creation was to be Freedom itself.... As soon as they set to work — they had their own conception of how it had to be done — being totally free, they chose to do it independently. Instead of taking the attitude of servant and instrument of which Sri Aurobindo speaks in what I have just read to you,¹ they naturally took the attitude of the master, and this mistake — as I may call it — was the first cause, the essential cause of all the disorder in the universe. As soon as there was separation — for that is the essential cause, separation — as soon as there was separation between the Supreme and what had been emanated, Consciousness changed into inconscience, Light into darkness, Love into hatred, Bliss into suffering, Life into death and Truth into falsehood. And they proceeded with their creations independently, in separation and disorder.

The result is the world as we see it. It was made progressively, stage by stage, and it would truly take a little too long to tell you all that, but finally, the consummation is Matter — obscure, inconscient, miserable.... The creative Force which had emanated these four Beings, essentially for the creation of the world, witnessed what was happening, and turning to the Supreme she prayed for the remedy and the cure of the evil that had been done.

Then she was given the command to precipitate her Consciousness into this inconscience, her Love into this suffering, and her Truth into this falsehood. And a

¹ The Mother had read "*The Delight of Works*" (Cent. ed. vol. 16, p. 288).

greater consciousness, a more total love, a more perfect truth than what had been emanated at first, plunged, so to say, into the horror of Matter in order to awaken in it consciousness, love and truth, and to begin the movement of Redemption which was to bring the material universe back to its supreme origin.

So, there have been what might be called "successive involutions" in Matter, and a history of these involutions. The present result of these involutions is the appearance of the Supermind emerging from the inconscience; but there is nothing to indicate that after this appearance there will be no others... for the Supreme is inexhaustible and will always create new worlds.

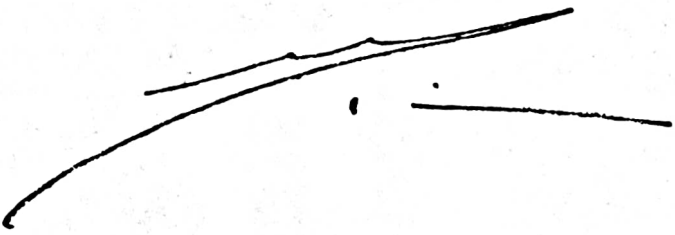
That is my story.

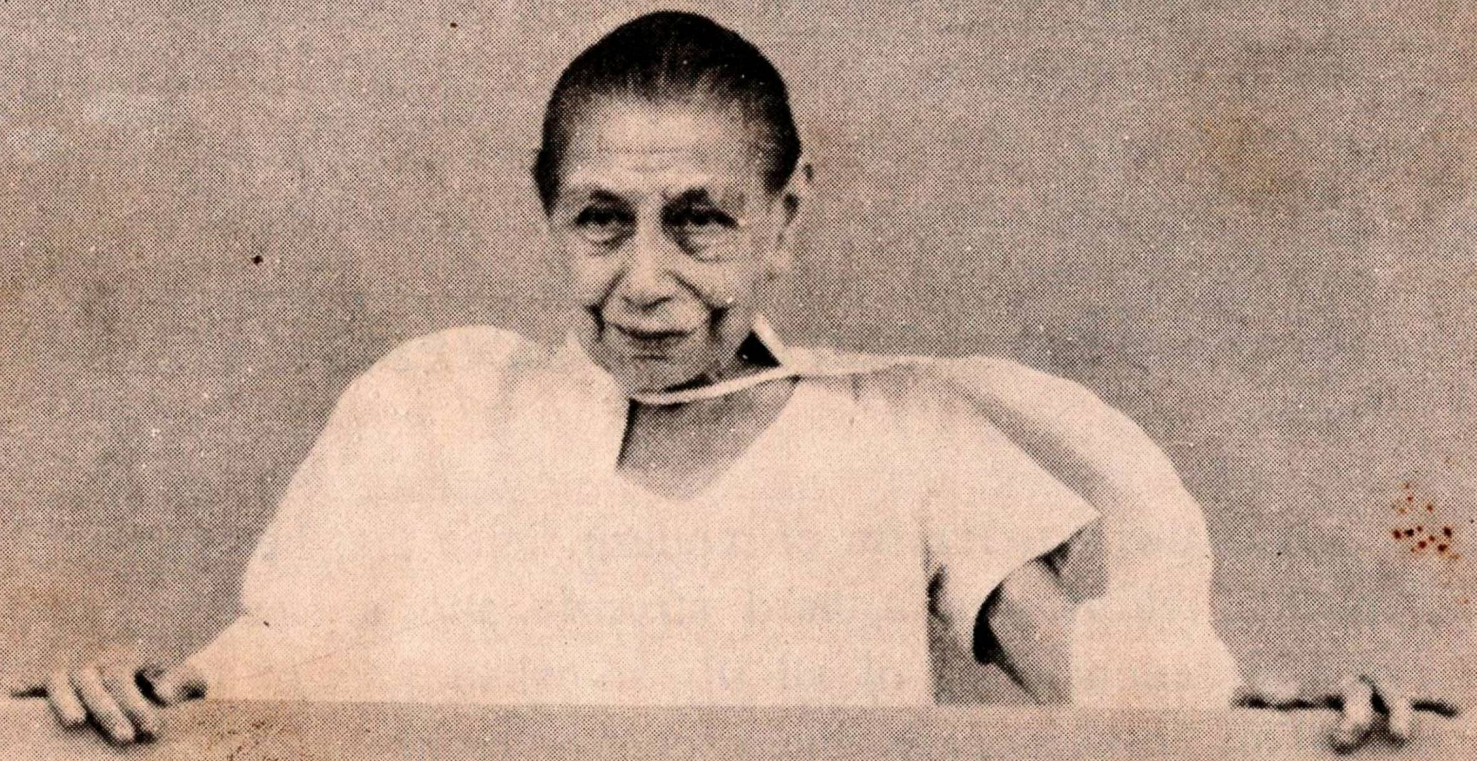
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THE MOTHER

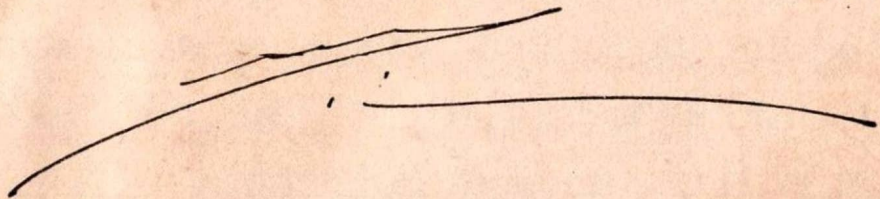
(*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 9, pp. 204-07)

*Since the beginning of the earth,
wherever and whenever there was the
possibility of manifesting a ray of
consciousness, I was there.*





At the very bottom of the
inconscience most hard and rigid
and narrow and stifling I struck
upon an almighty spring that cast
me up forthwith into a formless
limitless Vast vibrating with the
seeds of a new world.



The Needed Synthesis

It is the materialism of modern times that has turned spiritual effort into a hard struggle and a sacrifice, a painful renunciation of all the so-called joys of life.

This insistence on the exclusive reality of the physical world, of physical pleasures, physical joys, physical possessions, is the result of the whole materialistic tendency of human civilisation. It was unthinkable in ancient times. On the contrary, withdrawal, concentration, liberation from all material cares, consecration to the spiritual joy, that was happiness indeed.

From this point of view it is quite evident that humanity is far from having progressed; and those who were born into the world in the centres of materialistic civilisation have in their subconscious this horrible notion that only material realities are real and that to be concerned with things that are not material represents a wonderful spirit of sacrifice, an almost sublime effort. Not to be preoccupied from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn with all the little physical satisfactions, physical pleasures, physical sensations, physical pre-occupations, is to bear evidence of a remarkable spirit. One is not aware of it, but the whole of modern civilisation is built on this conception: "Ah, what you can

touch, you are sure that is true; what you can see, you are sure that is true; what you have eaten, you are sure of having eaten it; but all the rest — pooh! We are not sure whether they are not vain dreams and whether we are not giving up the real for the unreal, the substance for the shadow. After all, what are you going to gain? A few dreams! But when you have some coins in your pocket, you are sure that they are there!”

And that is everywhere, underneath everything. Scratch the appearances just a little, it is there, within your consciousness; and from time to time you hear this thing whispering within you, “Take care, don’t be taken in.” Indeed, it is lamentable.

We have been told that evolution is progressive and that it follows a spiral of ascending progression. I do not doubt that what one calls comfort in modern cities is a much higher degree of evolution than the comfort of the cave-man. But in ancient narratives, they always spoke of a power of foresight, of the prophetic spirit, the announcement of future events through visions, life’s intimacy with something more subtle that had for the simple people of that age a more concrete reality.

Now, in those beautiful cities that are so comfortable, when one wants to condemn anything, what does one say? — “It’s a dream, it is imagination.”

And precisely, if a person lives in an inner perception, people look at him slightly askance and wonder whether he is altogether mentally sound. One who does not pass his time in striving for wealth or in trying to increase his comforts and well-being, to secure a good position and become an important person, a

man who is not like that is mistrusted, people wonder whether he is in his right mind.

And all that is so much the stuff of the atmosphere, the content of the air you breathe, the orientation of the thoughts received from others that it seems absolutely natural. You do not feel that it is a grotesque monstrosity.

To become a little more conscious of oneself, to enter into relation with the life behind the appearances, does not seem to you to be the greatest good. When you sit in a comfortable chair, in front of a lavish meal, when you fill your stomach with delicious dishes, that certainly appears to you much more concrete and much more interesting. And if you look at the day that has passed, if you take stock of your day, if you have had some material advantage, some pleasure, a physical satisfaction, you mark it as a good day; but if you have received a good lesson from life, if it has given you a knock on your nose to tell you that you are a stupid fellow, you do not give thanks to the Grace, you say, "Oh, life is not always fun !"

When I read these ancient texts,¹ I really have the impression that from the inner point of view, from the point of view of the true life, we have fallen back terribly and that for the acquisition of a few ingenious mechanisms, a few encouragements to physical laziness, the acquisition of instruments and gadgets that lessen the effort of living, we have renounced the reality of

¹ The Mother refers to the Buddhist teachings as contained in the Dhammapada, which she used to read in her weekly classes with the children of the Ashram School, in 1957-58.

the inner life. It is that sense which has been lost and it needs an effort for you to think of learning the meaning of life, the purpose of existence, the goal towards which we must advance, towards which all life advances, whether you want it or not. One step towards the goal, oh ! it needs so much effort to do that. And generally one thinks of it only when the outer circumstances are not pleasant.

How far we are from the times when the shepherd, who did not go to school and kept watch over his flock at night under the stars, could read in the stars what was going to happen, commune with something which expressed itself through Nature, and had the sense of the profound beauty and that peace which a simple life gives !

It is very unfortunate that one has to give up one thing in order to gain another. When I speak of the inner life, I am far from opposing any modern inventions, far from it, but how much these inventions have made us artificial and stupid ! How much we have lost the sense of true beauty, how much we burden ourselves with useless needs !

Perhaps the time has come to continue the ascent in the curve of the spiral and now with all that this knowledge of matter has brought us, we shall be able to give to our spiritual progress a more solid basis. Strong with what we have learnt of the secrets of material Nature, we shall be able to join the two extremes and rediscover the supreme Reality in the very heart of the atom.

THE MOTHER

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 3, pp. 203-06)

The Mainspring of Our Actions

All that we do and attempt proceeds from faith, and if we are deficient in faith nothing can be accomplished. When we are deficient in faith our work begins to flag and failure is frequent; but if we have faith things are done for us. No great work has ever been done without this essential courage. Misled by egoism, we believe that we are working, that the results of what we do are our creation, and when anything has to be done we ask ourselves whether we have the strength, the means, the requisite qualities, but in reality all work is done by the will of God and when faith in Him is the mainspring of our actions, success is inevitable. Sometimes we wish a thing very intensely and our wish is accomplished. The wish was in fact a prayer, and all sincere prayer receives its answer. It need not be consciously addressed to God, because prayer is not a form of words but an aspiration. If we aspire, we pray. But the aspiration must be absolutely unselfish, not alloyed by the thought of petty advantages or lower aims if it is to succeed. When we mingle self with our aspirations, we weaken to that extent the strength of the prayer and the success is proportionately less.

Whoever believes in God, rises above his lower self;



Sri Aurobindo in Amravati

January 1908

for God is the true Self of the Universe and of everything within the Universe. When we rely upon our lower self, we are left to that lower self, and succeed or fail according to our strength of body or intellect under the law of our past life and actions. There is one law for the lower self and another for the higher. The lower self is in bondage to its past; the higher is lord of the past, the present and the future. So the will of the lower self is born of *ahaṅkāra* and limited by *ahaṅkāra*, but the will of the higher self is beyond *ahaṅkāra* and cannot be limited by it. It is omnipotent. But so long as it works through the body, it works under the laws of time, space and causality and we have to wait for its fulfilment till the time is ready, the environment prepared, the immediate causes brought about. The will once at work infallibly brings about the necessary conditions; all we have to do is to allow it to work.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bande Mataram*, Cent. ed. vol. 1, pp. 764-65)

**The relation of the child to the Mother
is that of an entire, sincere and simple trust,
love and dependence.**

Sri Aurobindo

The Rule for Yoga

Keep yourself open to the Mother, remember her always and let her Force work in you, rejecting all other influences — that is the rule for yoga.

*

Openness is a *state* of consciousness which keeps it turned to the Mother, free from other movements expecting and able to receive what may come from the Divine.

*

Always keep in touch with the Divine Force. The best thing for you is to do that simply and allow it to do its own work; wherever necessary, it will take hold of the inferior energies and purify them; at other times it will empty you of them and fill you with itself. But if you let your mind take the lead and discuss and decide what is to be done, you will lose touch with the Divine Force and the lower energies will begin to act for themselves and all go into confusion and a wrong movement.

*

Surrender is the best way of opening; but aspira-

tion and quietness can do it up to a certain point so long as there is not the surrender.

*

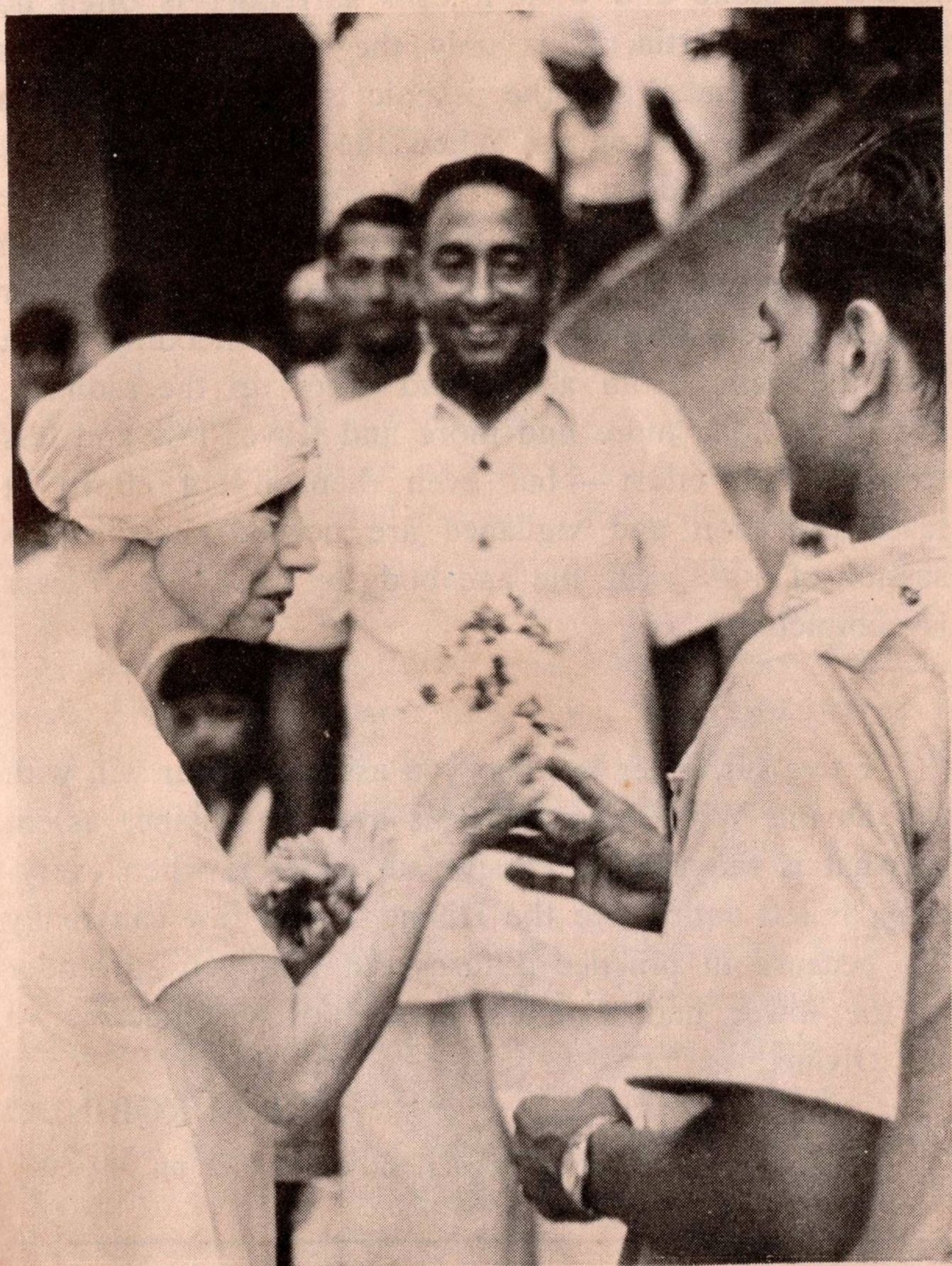
There is no method in this yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness; one can concentrate also in the head or between the eyebrows, but for many this is a too difficult opening. When the mind falls quiet and the concentration becomes strong and the aspiration intense, then there is a beginning of experience. The more the faith, the more rapid the result is likely to be. For the rest one must not depend on one's own efforts only, but succeed in establishing a contact with the Divine and a receptivity to the Mother's Power and Presence.

*

In the early part of the sadhana — and by early I do not mean a short part — effort is indispensable. Surrender of course, but surrender is not a thing that is done in a day. The mind has its ideas and it clings to them; the human vital resists surrender, for what it calls surrender in the early stages is a doubtful kind of self-giving with a demand in it; the physical consciousness

It is not by meditation alone that what is needed will come. It is by faith and openness to the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo



The Mother giving flowers
April 1950

is like a stone and what it calls surrender is often no more than inertia. It is only the psychic that knows how to surrender and the psychic is usually very much veiled in the beginning. When the psychic awakes, it can bring a sudden and true surrender of the whole being, for the difficulty of the rest is rapidly dealt with and disappears. But till then effort is indispensable. Or else it is necessary till the Force comes flooding down into the being from above and takes up the sadhana, does it for one more and more and leaves less and less to individual effort — but even then, if not effort, at least aspiration and vigilance are needed till the possession of mind, will, life and body by the Divine Power is complete.

*

Active surrender is when you associate your will with the Divine Will, reject what is not the Divine, assent to what is the Divine. Passive surrender is when everything is left entirely to the Divine — that few can really do, because in practice it turns out that you surrender to the lower nature under pretext of surrendering to the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga*, Cent. ed. vol. 23, pp. 588-606)

The surrender must be to the Mother — not even to the Force, but to the Mother herself.

Sri Aurobindo

The Sleep Consciousness

Sleep, because of its subconscious basis, usually brings a falling down to a lower level, unless it is a conscious sleep; to make it more and more conscious is the one permanent remedy: but also until that is done, one should always react against this sinking tendency when one wakes and not allow the effect of dull nights to accumulate. But these things need always a settled endeavour and discipline and must take time, sometimes a long time. It will not do to refrain from the effort because immediate results do not appear.

*

The gap made by the night and waking with the ordinary consciousness is the case with everybody almost (of course, the "ordinary" consciousness differs according to the progress); but it is no use wanting to be conscious in sleep; you have to get the habit of getting back the thread of the progress as soon as may be and for that there must be some concentration after rising.

You need not meditate at once [after waking in the morning] — but for a few moments take a concentrated attitude calling the Mother's presence for the day.

At night, you have to pass into sleep in the con-

centration — you must be able to concentrate with the eyes closed, lying down and the concentration must deepen into sleep — that is to say, sleep must become a concentrated going inside away from the outer waking state. If you find it necessary to sit for a time you may do so, but afterwards lie down keeping the concentration till this happens.

*

...In ordinary sleep the consciousness in the body is that of the subconscient physical, which is a diminished consciousness, not awake and alive like the rest of the being. The rest of the being stands back and part of its consciousness goes out into other planes and regions and has experiences which are recorded in dreams such as that you have related. You say you go to very bad places and have experiences like the one you narrate; but that is not a sign, necessarily, of anything wrong in you. It merely means that you go into the vital world, as everybody does, and the vital world is full of such places and such experiences. What you have to do is not so much to avoid at all going there, for it cannot be avoided altogether, but to go with full protection until you get mastery in these regions of supraphysical Nature. That is one reason why you should remember the Mother and open to the Force before sleeping; for the more you get that habit and do it successfully, the more the protection will be with you.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga*, Cent. ed. vol. 24, pp. 1479-86)



IMAGINATION

Abundant and varied, may be charming but must not be substituted for the Truth.

Botanical name: Cassia fistula *Common name:* Golden-shower tree
(fragrant canary-yellow flowers in long clusters)

The Mother's Writings

— Their Inspiration, Their Joy

The Mother was essentially a spiritual seeker, a realiser, a promoter of the spiritual pursuit, of the integral transformation of life, of the progressive realisation and manifestation of the Divine in individuals and the World. Her writings reflect this quality of life. They normally pertain to 'doing' and 'living': they arise out of practical situations and promote achievements of greater and higher things. Explanations of things come in as means to this end. Her writings are, therefore, concise, simple, straight and easy to understand. They all proceed from her experience, clear and actually lived, have in view the experience and life of the person or persons addressed and intently aim at promoting the desired growth. Further, they proceed from a warm profound feeling and carry a rich content of the same. It is of a clear and intense joy of the truth conveyed and of love and compassion for those to whom it is conveyed. And very often it touches the reader or the hearer deeply, he is able to receive and assimilate it easily.

One has to make an experience of it oneself to get the full joy and benefit of it. One should let the writing and its thought and feeling and spiritual vibration play upon his mind in a relaxed and a joyous frame of mind and then watch how it affects him, creates an aspiration, a joy, a harmonious feeling and a clearer understanding in him.

The earliest writings of the Mother belong to the year 1912. They are short essays on some practical issues which were presented to a group of seekers in Paris for a collective contemplation. Besides these were a few longer essays entitled '*The Supreme Discovery*', '*On Thought*', '*On Dreams*', etc. The first is specially elevating and heartening to aspirants and is available separately too. These were published much later in a book form under the title '*Words of Long Ago*'.

About the same time, i.e. 1912 the Mother started recording as Diary her experiences of the intensive Sadhana she was following then. These experiences are a marvellous guidance for those who seek a genuine spiritual growth in life. These were published later, in part under the title '*Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*'.

Her '*Tales of All Times*', is a book of stories, most interesting and elevating, intended for children. These tales present incidents of the life of great men of human history as a whole. India, Arabia, Europe, China and Japan are all there. And there are personal touches and comments too which are particularly illuminating. It is a work of selection and editing, which young and old read again and again with much joy.

During her stay in Japan, Mother gave a talk, which was later on published as '*Mother's Talk to the Women of Japan*'. This involves an appeal and a message that a woman has to create the future man in a conscious and a deliberate manner, to will the quality of his character, his personality, his consciousness. This is Mother's spiritual ideal of maternity.

From 1920 to 1973, when she left her body, is

the most important and creative Pondicherry period of her life. And the largest writing of this period consists of letters written to Sadhaks for the guidance of life and the instructions given to workers regarding the right approach in work and the practical discipline of karma yoga. These letters and instructions are being organised and will be published in the "*Collected Works of the Mother*", which are coming out in fifteen volumes.

As a book we had in the year 1931 Mother's '*Conversations*', which over a long period remained the most popular book of the Pondicherry Ashram. This consists of questions and answers on the most varied issues of life — yoga, illness, sleep, dream, work, art, reincarnation, etc. etc., which a spiritual seeker is much interested in.

At a certain stage during the Pondicherry period the Mother started taking classes which were attended by children and grown-ups and these continued for a very long time. Out of these have arisen the bulk of Mother's writings. These are talks and answers to questions and are encyclopaedic in character and extremely warm personal communications published under the title "*Questions and Answers*" in many volumes.

A time came when these much cherished classes ceased and then her '*Notes on the Way*' recording her experiences of the transformation of the physical, which appeared regularly in the issues of the "Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education" became the prominent thing. These by themselves are large in volume, of which only a part has so far appeared in the Bulletin issues.

The Bulletin started appearing in 1949 (February)

and the Mother was regularly writing for it. Her book "*On Education*" had appeared in it serially. So also her "*Four Austerities and Four Liberations*". And the two plays "*Towards the Future*" and "*A Great Secret*". Also "*The Ideal Child*". There were shorter articles on "Youth", "Inexhaustible Energy", etc. besides.

There are three works of the Mother, which are in the nature of comments on "Dhammapada", on "Thoughts and Aphorisms" and on "Savitri". These comments are an experience, succinct, deep and penetrating and highly illuminating, very often giving a thrill of joy.

"*Flowers and Their Messages*" is another compilation of the works of the Mother, which gives by itself a complete approach of yoga and sadhana. Beauty as a pathway to the Divine is a new Sadhana of Mother's creation and in this work she has given the inner spiritual quality and vibration of a very large number of flowers and at times also gives an elaborative comment, which is a delightful positive direction for Sadhana.

The actual working and development of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, its department of Physical Education, to which Mother devoted so much of her time and attention and the international township of Auroville have evoked from the Mother comments and directions in the varied situation of educational work, sports activities and social living. These are intensely practical and reveal an original approach to educational problems, problems of sports life and those of humanity and social organisation. They are quite large in volume and are being brought out in distinctive publications.

Mother's messages, given to individuals, institutions, organisations, visiting dignitaries, etc. on special occasions are a writing of a class by itself. They give a strikingly new direction and orientation to life. They are fine topics for contemplation and realisation.

The Mother has translated Sri Aurobindo's work into French and this she was doing almost all along. These were published and widely used in France and other French knowing parts of the world. And they have served a large purpose in conveying the spiritual message of Sri Aurobindo to the wider world outside.

Mother's writings have appeared in many compilations too which have been published from Pondicherry or elsewhere and they are so illuminating on the varied issues of the compilations. Indian languages, specially Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati and Oriya present Mother's writings in authentic rendering in a large measure. They are available in Telugu, Marathi and Kannada too. European languages, besides English and French, German, Spanish and Italian too offer a few books of the Mother.

Mother's writings essentially bear upon the spiritual seeking of man, his life's growth and fulfilment, his right attitude and work, his progress and evolution, his highest destiny in a world of progressive harmony and divine manifestation. An integral transformation of life is the theme. Supermind, Superman and a divine fulfilment are the aim. Evidently a perennial theme and a constant inspiration for man and his future.

INDRA SEN